
ICOC TAKES A STAND ON PENDING STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

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Board Votes to Oppose Ortiz/Runner (SCA 13) and to Support Castle/DeGette (HR 810)

SAN JOSE, CA — The Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC) for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) convened here today. The ICOC considered pending legislation at the state and federal level on stem cell research and the adoption of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Medical and Ethical Standards as the CIRM interim standards.

The ICOC today voted unanimously to oppose SCA 13 (Ortiz/Runner) stating:

The Independent Citizens Oversight Committee opposes SCA 13. We are committed to working with the Legislature to advance stem cell research, to ensure transparency, to prevent conflicts of interest, to provide an outstanding peer review system, to provide a strong and effective intellectual property program to protect the interests of the State of California and its citizens, and we believe we have put standards and policies in place to achieve these objectives. The ICOC also shares the goal that therapies and cures developed through research funded by Proposition 71 be made available to all members of the California public. As currently drafted however, SCA 13 will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for scientists to do their jobs, and it will delay critically needed medical therapies.

"We have many of the same goals as Senator Ortiz, and we all see the promise in funding the research that was mandated by the people of California. That's why we cannot understand this rush to judgment to try and get SCA 13 on this fall's ballot," said Robert Klein, Chair of the ICOC. "Today many distinguished board members made it clear that the current language in SCA 13 would destroy Proposition 71; it's time to work together and get down to the business of finding treatments and cures for chronic diseases. The Assembly's legislation, ACR 252 and this year's ACR 24, both introduced by Gene Mullin, along with ACR 1 by Gloria Negrete McLeod represent extremely thoughtful legislative initiatives providing direction through the Assembly's taskforce on Intellectual Property and constructive guidance and reporting requirements on conflicts of interest. We want to work with the Legislature."

"We are doing our best at CIRM to start our scientific program in stem cell research. If enacted, SCA 13 will stop us in our tracks," said interim President, Zach Hall, Ph.D. "As a neuroscientist and former Director at the National Institutes of Health, I can say with assurance that SCA 13 will cripple our efforts, making it impossible to put California at the forefront of stem cell research."

The ICOC also unanimously voted to support HR 810 (Castle/DeGette) and S 471 (Specter/Harkin). The Castle/DeGette bill is scheduled for a vote before the House of Representatives this week.

The ICOC also voted today to adopt the NAS Medical and Ethical Standards, released on April 26, 2005, as the CIRM Interim Standards. These will serve as the interim standards for the period of 270 days of public hearings, or until the ICOC approves permanent standards based on the recommendations of the Scientific and Medical Accountability Standards Working Group, which is expected to meet in early July.

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